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OCI-1266/66

(61)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
9 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 3:30 P.M.)

1. Later information (an unofficial Embassy translation) on the Buddhist communiques (nos. 37-39) issued in Saigon today suggests that the Buddhist Institute is attempting to tighten up its organization to obtain better control over Saigon demonstrations to make them appear less irresponsible. Buddhist followers are requested not to participate in demonstrations other than those organized by the Unified Buddhist Association. A "Leadership Committee of the Buddhist Forces" will decide the date, time, location and themes of future demonstrations or meetings. There is no mention in the communiques of the "Leadership Committee" announcing its intentions to the government beforehand.

2. In one of the communiques, the Institute declared that it represents the Buddhist followers' desire to have an elected constitutional (constitution-drafting) assembly in the shortest possible time. The communiques did not make note of other demands (civilian government, withdrawal of marines from Da Nang) which the northern Buddhist leadership has put forth. The Institute also asked that public security forces be stationed around the Institute itself until order can be restored to the city. According to a press report, when approximately 1000 persons outside the Institute were ready to demonstrate, Thich Ho Giac called them back inside.

ARMY review(s) completed.

State Dept. review completed

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3. There were no demonstrations in Hue or Da Nang on 9 April and those in Saigon were milder and smaller than on 8 April. A demonstration is, however, scheduled to depart tomorrow from the Buddhist Institute and the Buddhist Youth Association and is expected to include 400-500 Buddhist judo students who will provide "protection" against police or Catholics who attempt to interfere.

4. The evacuation of 227 civilians and 434 US military personnel was completed in Da Nang without incident. Radio Da Nang broadcast a message to Ambassador Lodge demanding that the US government stop supporting the "Thieu-Ky-Co clique." The Buddhist chaplain's office in Da Nang has condemned the "Americans' plot of hindering the Vietnamese people's convening of a national assembly," in a declaration which also reiterated the Buddhist's five aspirations.

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OCI-1264/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
2 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 10:30 A.M.)

1. Today the Ky government again declined to force its authority on restive Da Nang even though it was agreed yesterday at the Directorate meeting in Saigon to do so. The move may yet come as the new I Corps commander, General Ton That Dinh, and General Vien have reportedly left for Da Nang from Hue where they met with General Nhuan, 1st Division commander, and Buddhist leaders. MACV reports, however, that the 33rd and 35th Ranger battalions are not scheduled to leave Bien Hoa and Saigon, respectively, as was planned yesterday. There is no official or press reporting yet to explain either the vacillation of the government in reinforcing the three marine battalions at the air base or any further changes in Directorate strategy.

2. Government hopes for a split between northern and Saigon Buddhists were dealt a severe blow in Saigon. Thich Tri Quang reportedly attended, and probably masterminded, a meeting at the Buddhist Institute between influential clerics Thich Tam Chau, Thich Thien Minh, and Thich Ho Giac. After the meeting, a communique, signed by Tam Chau, was read to demonstrators announcing the formation of a country-wide "Buddhist Struggle Force" which will accept leadership of all disparate elements in opposition to the government. The Saigon Buddhist headquarters will be the command post of the Struggle Force, which will be led overtly by Thien Minh and Ho Giac. Subsequent demonstrations are to be organized and led by

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Buddhist monks after the government has been informed of the time and place.

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3. [REDACTED] although the Directorate retains its unity, senior and experienced field-grade officers loyal to the government might "sweep the generals out" in the continued absence of action against dissident I Corps and take appropriate action themselves. General Khang, of the Directorate, has been so informed.

4. At the Directorate meeting yesterday, members agreed that chairman Nguyen Van Thieu is the only person authorized to negotiate with the Buddhists on behalf of the government, thus canceling prior discussions between Ky and Buddhist leaders.

5. A small group of Catholic students in Saigon reportedly called on the government to publish its plan for general elections quickly as street demonstrations are helping the Communists.

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